

My name is Dr. Richard Ahrens, and I am a board member of the American Lung Association of Illinois-Iowa and president of the Iowa Thoracic Society. Thank you for allowing me to testify about environmental health and our aging population.

There is extensive evidence that air pollution contributes to lung disease, including respiratory tract infections, asthma, and lung cancer. Though we live in a rural state, we are not immune from this problem. Lung disease claims close to 335,000 lives in our country every year. Over the last decade, the death rate for lung disease has risen faster than that of any of the top five causes of death.ⁱ Particulate matter air pollution is especially harmful to people with lung disease such as asthma or chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, which includes chronic bronchitis and emphysema. For example, exposure to particulate air pollution can trigger asthma attacks in individuals with sensitive airways. We are concerned about sulfur dioxide and nitrogen dioxide levels in Iowa. Exposure to these pollutants causes alterations in pulmonary defenses and lowers resistance to respiratory infections. Ozone is also a problem in areas of Iowa. People at particular risk from high ozone levels include those already afflicted with asthma, emphysema and chronic bronchitis, senior citizens, individuals who exercise outdoors, and children.

Clearly, all of our citizens need adequate protection from environmental effects on their respiratory health. However, young children and the elderly are particularly susceptible to adverse effects of air pollution. There are 436,213 Iowans over the age of 65.ⁱⁱ In 2001, in Iowa, 205,407 people over the age of 65 had lung disease, including asthma, chronic bronchitis, emphysema, and lung cancer. In addition, 38,367 children had asthma. Both groups represent people in need of special protection from the effects of air pollution, but we all benefit from and require such measures.

As we live longer and our population ages, our senior citizens expect to be, and can be, healthier than any prior generation. Senior citizens' lives can be positively affected by reducing air pollution. The *Technical Addendum to Methodologies for the Benefit Analysis of the Clear Skies Initiative* by EPA estimates that air pollution can take up to five years off people's lives.

ⁱ Outdoor Air Pollution Fact Sheet, August 2000, American Lung Association.

ⁱⁱ 2000 Census.

Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease is one of the top four leading causes of death for persons age 65 years and older. It is a cause of premature death that is worsened by air pollution.ⁱⁱⁱ Ozone provokes asthma attacks and particulate pollution is linked to lung cancer. Clean air, healthier seniors and lower health-care costs for everyone are inter-related and we encourage policymakers to acknowledge and act on these links. We ask EPA to promote continued aggressive reduction in levels of unhealthy air pollution.

However, I have read with concern press reports indicating that Office of Management and Budget is using cost analysis procedures to justify the lowering of air pollution standards and the rollback of current emission targets. This analysis values our seniors less just because the majority of life is behind them. This is not acceptable. Air quality affects us all, young and old. We can not afford to weaken our efforts to provide cleaner air and a safer environment for all of our citizens.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today on behalf of the American Lung Association of Iowa-Illinois and the Iowa Thoracic Society.

ⁱⁱⁱ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics, Trends in Health and Aging, Trends in Causes of Death Among the Elderly, March 2001.